



Morning Alert - Friday, June 23, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning News

NHK gave top play to a report that the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election will be officially announced today, saying that there are about 250 candidates. All commercial networks led with reports on LDP lawmaker Mayuko Toyoda's alleged harassment of her former secretary, saying that Toyoda resigned from the party on Thursday.

Top stories in national dailies included a memorial to be held in Okinawa today to mark the end of the Battle of Okinawa (Asahi); a GOJ plan to draw up by December its basic policy for free education (Mainichi); an LDP plan to seek Diet agreement by around June 2018 on constitutional amendment (Yomiuri); survey results showing that midsize companies listed on five startup-focused Japanese exchanges enjoyed faster sales and profit growth than larger counterparts in the fiscal year that ended in March (Nikkei); and the release of a report by the National Council of Resistance of Iran indicating Iran's continued missile development with the help of North Korea even after the 2015 nuclear deal (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

U.S. and China remain at odds over pressure on North Korea

All papers reported on the first session of the U.S.-China Diplomatic and Security Dialogue on Wednesday in Washington. The papers wrote that although the U.S. and China agreed that companies of the two nations should not do business with North Korean entities that are subject to UN sanctions, differences remained between them over the need for additional pressure on North Korea. Secretary of State Tillerson stressed at a post-meeting news conference that China needs to

apply greater economic and diplomatic pressure on Pyongyang, but a spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry stated in a press briefing that China does not apply pressure on other nations. The Chinese delegation quickly left the venue of the meeting without holding a joint press conference or issuing a joint statement with the U.S.

The papers wrote that the two nations also discussed China's militarization of the South China Sea. Although the U.S. expressed its opposition to any moves to change the status quo in the region and reiterated its plans to continue freedom of navigation operations there, China repeated its claim over the Spratly Islands and surrounding area.

Japan, South Korea to set up hotline for defense chiefs

Nikkei wrote that the governments of Japan and South Korea have agreed to set up a hotline between their defense ministers in the autumn to help top officials of the SDF and the ROK military communicate more quickly in response to the growing threat posed by North Korea. Defense Minister Inada and her ROK counterpart Han confirmed the plan at their meeting on June 3. The paper wrote that although there is concern that South Korean President Moon's hardline stance on the comfort women issue could have a negative impact on security cooperation between Tokyo and Seoul, he has expressed understanding for Japan-ROK cooperation against North Korea. The paper added, however, that there are hurdles to cooperation between the SDF and the ROK military because the two nations have not been able to begin discussing an acquisition and cross-servicing agreement and Seoul refuses to allow the SDF to evacuate Japanese nationals from South Korea in the event of an emergency on the Korean Peninsula.

North Korean foreign ministry launches website

NHK and Fuji TV reported this morning that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK launched a website both in English and Korean on Thursday. NHK said the website carries reports on North Korea's diplomatic activities and ministry statements, adding that it also says that the DPRK has diplomatic relations with more than 160 nations. The network also said the website notes that its Asian Affairs Department 1 is in charge of Japan, and its North American Affairs Department is in charge of the U.S. The site also carries photos of a missile hitting a target vessel. NHK speculated that Pyongyang is aiming to assert its positions more than ever through its new website amid increasing international pressure on its nuclear and missile programs.

Japan to send research mission to Northern Territories

All papers wrote that Foreign Minister Kishida announced on Thursday that Japan will send a government-private research mission to the Northern Territories from June 27 through July 1 to assess potential joint economic activities there. Special Adviser to the Prime Minister Hasegawa will lead the group of about 70 MOFA, METI and other officials and private-sector experts. The mission is aimed at making progress in Japan's territorial negotiations with Russia by promoting economic activities in the region.

Japan to offer support to South Sudan refugees in Uganda

Asahi wrote that the GOJ will step up its support for South Sudan refugees who fled to Uganda by providing \$10 million in grant aid to Uganda. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Nobuo Kishi plans to announce Japan's aid on Friday in Uganda at a refugee relief meeting in which UN Secretary General Guterres will participate.

Abe to retain Vice Foreign Minister Sugiyama

Asahi wrote that Prime Minister Abe has decided to keep Vice Foreign Minister Sugiyama in his post in view of the importance of the continuity of "Abe diplomacy." The paper wrote that the premier and other senior officials at the Kantei have strong confidence in Sugiyama. *[Note: MOFA conducts a regular personnel review every summer.]*

SECURITY

U.S.-Japan test to shoot down ballistic missile apparently fails

Asahi and Sankei wrote that the Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency announced on Thursday that Japan conducted a joint exercise with the U.S. Missile Defense Agency to shoot down a ballistic missile with a Standard Missile-3 Block 2A missile interceptor on Thursday off Hawaii. The papers wrote that the test apparently failed because the two nations could not confirm whether the missile hit the target. The U.S. and Japan succeeded in their first test of the system in February.

Defense ministry to make budget request for Aegis Ashore

Asahi wrote that it has learned from several GOJ sources that the Ministry of Defense has decided to make a budget request for procurement of an Aegis Ashore land-based ballistic missile defense system in its budget request for fiscal 2018. The planned procurement is aimed at enhancing Japan's capability to respond to North Korean missiles. According to the sources, the ministry has decided to forgo the idea of introducing the THAAD anti-ballistic missile defense system and will make a final decision on the Aegis Ashore system next month. Asahi added that Defense Minister Inada is making arrangements to visit Hawaii next month to tour the U.S. military's experimental facility for the Aegis Ashore system there.

GOJ to disseminate instructions for evacuation in event of North Korean missile attack

Asahi wrote that the GOJ will begin today airing a 30-second TV public service announcement providing instructions on how to evacuate in the event of a ballistic missile attack by North Korea. The paper wrote that it is unusual for the GOJ to disseminate instructions for an emergency. The government plans to air the announcement for two weeks on 43 commercial networks nationwide and place a print version in 70 national and local papers.

ECONOMY

GOJ to beef up TPP taskforce

Asahi wrote that the GOJ will increase the number of officials assigned to its TPP taskforce from the current 18 to around 30 to strengthen its functions in an effort to seek a “TPP 11” pact.

JA calls on GOJ to maintain farm tariffs in EPA talks with EU

Asahi wrote that concerning Japan’s ongoing EPA talks with the EU, Japan Agricultural Cooperatives, also known as JA, called on Farm Minister Yamamoto on Thursday to maintain tariffs on pork, dairy, and other farm products.

In a related development, Nikkei wrote that the LDP plans to ask the Abe administration not to make concessions in the EPA negotiations with the EU that would lower tariffs on farm products below the levels agreed on in the TPP.

